



# CURRENTS

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This collaboration of creativity  
is dedicated to Fran  
MacPherson Kohak for years of  
support, guidance, and  
friendship.

Cover by  
Nancy and Pedro

Time is often misplaced  
This is the toy chest  
E.R.K.

Life is but a dream  
This is the way we row our boat  
D.R.

## Teddy and Leon

Leon was the kind of person that never looked like he fit the chair he was sitting in. Bar stool or easy chair, either way he just didn't look right sitting down. Standing, that's how I'll always remember him, his fraction under six-foot frame leaning against the wall at the far end of the The Pub's bar, slightly hunched over listening to Teddy's latest idea. Teddy always sat down at the bar and Leon always stood next to him, one forearm plopped on the bar, hand clutching his ever-present Rum and Coke.

Teddy was a lot shorter than Leon, or anyone else for that matter, so he always sat in a bar stool so no one would notice, unless of course, they noticed his feet dangling in the air above the bar's foot rest. Whenever Teddy was lost in deep thought, Leon would just stand there sliding his drink back and forth along the little track, its condensation had made on the bar's surface, waiting for the unveiling. This is how it always was, every night they were at the Pub.

I once made the mistake of interrupting Teddy while he was wrapped in one of his inspired thoughts. "Hey Teddy" I said in the jovial tone I always acquire after 3 or 4 drinks. "How are you tonight?" Leon cast his eyes into his icecubes. Teddy didn't move. I gave it another try. "Teddy, when I say 'Hello' that's your cue to say something back". Teddy whipped around and caught my eye with the look of a man that had watched me the last time I went to the bathroom. "Here" he said, "Here's a quarter, go play some Pac-man". He shoved the quarter in my hand and turned back to the drink napkin he'd been scribbling on. Leon shrugged and ordered another drink.

Nasty or not, a free game of Pac-man is nothing to refuse, so I turned away from them and headed to the videos.

Video games in bars are different from those found in arcades. They're the same game alright, but they're more difficult to play. Aside from having your own reactions dulled, the machines aren't in good shape either. Spilled drinks streak the screens and make the control knobs sticky, cigarettes left on the machine curr, the directions and melt the cute paint jobs, usually the sound is shut off so that the other patrons aren't annoyed by the beeps and zaps, and of course there are the idiots on their way to the bathroom or bar that plow into you and spill their drinks on your shoes, which is always a good time.

While wrestling with the machine, its extra bar room variables,

and the brush off I'd just gotten from Teddy and Leon, I felt a hand on my shoulder and a breeze in my ear. "What's up with them", the breeze said. I turned away from the screen, just long enough to get my Pac-man killed, to see who the breeze was. "They're always so aloof when they hang out here" continued the breeze, which had turned into Janet Bilmore. "Yeah" I said, turning back to my game. While my last Pac-man munched for dear life I found myself concentrating on Janet's streaked reflection in the screen. "Jesus, what a waste" I muttered as my last gobbler bit the dust. Janet just raised her eyebrows and led me to the booth that she and her friends were sharing.

I wasn't talking about the quarter I'd spent, thanks to Teddy, I was talking about Janet. She was the typical, kind of girl that was perfect in every way. She had the kind of a face that had to sit at the front of her head and no one else's. Her blonde hair was offset by one blue eye and one green eye, a strange mutation, but still the sexiest thing I'd ever seen. I wasn't alone, every guy that had ever met her fell for her. Unfortunately, once you got to know her the feeling didn't go away. She had a riviting personality that oozed of the kind of not-completely-innocent sweetness that made total strangers propose marriage, not one nighters. The most attractive part was that she had no idea that she was so appealing. Perhaps that's also the most tragic part.

"They're always aloof whenever they're together" I finally answered, "It's like a two man fraternity." She nodded, and ordered us both drinks. Her two friends, actually we're all mutual friends, were discussing the merits of light beers and paused only to say hello, then continued their conversation. I knew Teddy would call me over sooner or later but for the time being, I was quite content to be with Janet.

\*\*\* "Do you think they're gay?" she asked, as she always did. "No, of course not. I don't think they're anything at all except maybe a little weird." I said as a I realized I had fallen into her green eye and stayed there a little to long. She snapped her fingers in front of my eyes. "Wake up, its early yet." she said, laughing off what she must have known had happened. She continued, "Just how weird?". "Come on Jan, you went to school with them, same as me, you remember all the crazy stuff they used to do." I replied, "Like when they wired all the doors to the High School shut and called in the bomb threat." "They did that?" she gasped, the blue and the green getting equally wide. "You didn't know?" Jesus I shouldn't have brought it up. "Did they have a bomb?" "No Jan, I said they were crazy, not sick."

She looked disgusted "Well, I think its sick anyway, and don't start defending them again." What could I say? She was sort of right. Although they never did any real harm, I guess Teddy and Leon were kind of sick.

Back in Junior High it was a threesome, Teddy, Leon and me, but after a few months I backed off. I have to admit that they scared me sometimes. The head waitress unplugged the jukebox because the band was about to start. I hadn't even noticed the music since I sat down with Janet but I noticed the whirring wind-down of the song that got cut off. It brought to mind the Police and Fire engine sirens that shut off in front of Leon's house one Sunday afternoon, back when it was a three man fraternity.

The three of us had spent the entire day Saturday scaping the gunpowder out of about a million cap pistol caps. Sunday Teddy pounded it all into an empty tomato soup can, then he added some stuff he said he made at home that smelled like bleach. We were going to blow up a tree in the woods behind Leon's house, but we never got that far. After Teddy put the foil on the top, with the wick sticking out, we all marveled at our creation, with hearts pounding. Teddy snatched it off the kitchen table and started for the back door. Leon grabbed the matches and I followed third, caught up in the fantasy of commandoing. Rounding the corner to the hallway, Teddy slipped on a scatter run. Our creation sailed the rest of the distance of the hall, and turned Leon's back door into a garage door.

The explosion was tremendous. The aluminum screen door was found in the neighbor's back yard and most of Leon's mother's Redwood patio furniture was blown into fire wood. Inside the house the three of us were covered with dust, paneling, floor tiles, and glory. Teddy and Leon started to laugh. "Jesus, imagine what it would have done to a tree!" Teddy said with that gleam in his eye. "What?" Leon and I said, our ears ringing. "The explosion," Teddy repeated, "it was fantastic!" I had to agree. Then we heard the sirens. "You'd better get out of here, Donny" Leon said "We can handle it." I didn't need much convincing. I sprinted out the modified back door for my bike. The sirens were getting closer.

I found my bike had suffered in the explosion. Both of my tires were blown to bits, most of my spokes were scattered across the lawn, and my seat was wrapped around my handlebars. The sirens were getting closer. I high-tailed it for the woods, dragging my bicycle carcass behind me. I threw the twisted heap in the brook that ran through the woods and then I walked home. I told

my mom that I had spent the day at the playground and someone must have stolen my bike. We went down to the police station and filled out a report and then my mom grounded me for two weeks for not using my lock and chain. No one ever found out that I was involved with the explosion. I don't really know if Teddy and Leon got into a lot of trouble or not, because I avoided them for quite a while after that Sunday.

The band had started. "Do you want to dance?" I asked. Janet waited to make sure it wasn't a slow tune, then agreed. We got up and walked separately to the dance floor. I had never seen Janet dance slow with anyone. She enjoyed "bopping around" as she called it, but it seemed that she didn't want contact with me, or anyone else. I was never sure why, she had plenty of offers. I figured even just dancing with her was better than arguing about Teddy and Leon.

"Thank you". the lead singer said, his voice sounding like it was amplified through a dead fish, "We got plenty more." The Pub didn't exactly attract the best area bands, but they were good enough for a two dollar cover. Usually the band would slog through a bunch of old Beatles tunes, that were on the charts when I was three years old, they would scratch out a few of the simpler tunes that were on the current top forty charts. There were usually about four or five guys in the band wearing the typical, matching pants and vests, with open shirts, playing Sears guitars, who, if they were smart, hadn't quit their day jobs.

After "Hard Days's night" and "Drive my Car", Janet nodded towards the booth so we left the floor. Her timing was perfect, as usual. Just as we sat down, "Jimmy and the Tune Masters" started strumming through "Michelle." Janet looked down at her glass.

A waitress strode up to the booth and told me that some short guy and his geek-like buddy wanted to see me up at the bar. After she left, I looked over my shoulder to see Teddy and Leon staring in my direction. "Sound like a couple of real, he-men to me." Janet giggled. "I'll be back" I said ignoring her last comment. As I got up and walked across the room to the bar, I noticed all of the guys in the place eyeing the spot I had just vacated, in favor of "a short guy and the geek." I let out a low whistle, called myself stupid and squeezed up to the bar.

"Have a seat Don." Teddy said, "Jez, its been a few weeks since we saw you here." "It's only been a few hours actually." I replied, catching the bartender's eye with the dollar I was waving. "Oh, that, well I didn't want to loss my train of thought." Teddy said,

and continued "Look, what are you doing tonight? I figured we could go see my uncle out in Pittsfield. It is so boring here." "You kissed me off because you were contemplating your stinkin' uncle's house?" I asked a little too loudly. "Hey, hey," Teddy said, "Calm down, I was doing some *other* figuring then." "What other figuring Teddy?" I asked. "Donny, we can discuss it on the road." Teddy then turned to order his first drink of the night.

I looked back at Janet, and the vacant space beside her. "Teddy that's a three hour drive, and its snowing like a bitch out there." Teddy had caught my glance, "Oh, still wasting your time, huh?" Sore spot. "Now look Teddy," I said, "Its 11:30 now, three hours of driving in the snow to visit some back-woods uncle wouldn't sound like a fun time no matter who I was with."

I was lying I guess. If I had been there with Karen, my real, on-again-off-again girlfriend (mostly off-again), I would have cleared out in a minute. I didn't care about offending her anymore, not since I came home from school on a weekend I wasn't scheduled to and saw her at the Pub with some guy named Sid. Janet happened to be there that night. Together she and I slipped out when I was sure Karen wouldn't see me, and headed for the 24-hour Denny's restaurant. Janet watched me drink six cups of tea and she listened to me repeating "I'm fine, no problem." I brought Janet home and drove all the way back to school that night. I arrived at my dorm at 4 AM and interrupted my room mate and his current girl. I slept in the student lounge that night. The next day I burned all of Karen's letters, ripped up her pictures, and mailed the remains to her. Later, she sent me the typical excuses that girls send, which I tolerated but didn't believe.

"We're going in fifteen minutes," Teddy said, bringing me back into the conversation, "if you're coming, meet us out at the van." I walked away from the bar without answering, forgetting the drink I had ordered. When I returned to Janet's booth, I saw that my seat had been taken by some sandy-haired clown in a plush shirt with matching socks. "Oh, Donny," Janet said with a slight edge in her voice, "This is Jack, he says I look like a girl he goes to school with." she continued. Jack was looking at me, trying to stare me down actually. Janet rolled her green and her blue. "That's nice" I said, "Jack why don't you stop sitting on my jacket and go *back* to school?" "Maybe she doesn't want me to go." Jack said, spreading the upper buttons of his shirt. "Well?" I said, looking at Janet. "Well . . . Jack, it *is* his jacket, and um . . . this is his drink . . ." she said. "I'll be waiting in the bathroom for

a little while pal . . ." Jack said as he got up from the booth. "Have a good time", I said, sitting back down next to Janet, "You can probably get a booth for one in there." Jack stormed off to the bathroom. "You're not going in there are you?" Janet asked. "Of course not, he could tear me apart." I answered, speaking the truth. "I owe you one" she said. "You owe me a million," I answered, adding "and thanks for all of your help." "I couldn't just tell him to buzz off Donny." "Sure you could, its easy Jan." "What did Teddy and Leon want?" Janet asked, quickly changing the subject. "Oh . . . ah nothing really, the band took a break huh?" I answered. Janet continued, "They're due back any minute, Donny, what did they want?" Seeing that she wouldn't give up, I decided that it would be best to tell her. "They wanted me to leave with them to go visit some uncle of Teddy's in Pittsfield." "Now? Why?" Janet asked. "Jan I don't know, they wouldn't tell me." "Are you going to go with them?" "NO . . . I don't know, Jan you ask a lot of questions."

The band returned and told us how good it was to be "Back in the U.S.S.R.". I hadn't had a drink in quite a while, though I had been ordering them. I was fiddling with my car keys, which were on a ring that Leon had given me long ago. It was fashioned from one of my old bicycle spokes. Jack had long since finished waiting in the bathroom and had left with some girl in black boots, who no doubt looked like someone he went to school with. Janet's friends, who were still sitting with us were finishing what they said were their last drinks.

Teddy and Leon, coats on, came across the bar to the booth. "You comin'?" Teddy asked, while Leon was handing him the keys to the van, on a familiar looking key ring. "Yeah, we're going too, Janet" one of her friends said "you coming with us?" Janet looked at me. I was already there. The band eased into an almost on key rendition of "Yesterday". "Dance with me, Janet?" I asked. She opened her mouth, "Please." I said before the dreaded answer. She looked around, from Teddy to Leon to her friends then back to me. "OK" she said, taking my hand. "Sorry guys." I said, but Teddy and Leon had already turned to leave. "Intense moment, there folds." whistled one of Janet's friends. "Weirdos." added the other. "We'll see ya tomorrow Jan." they said as we all slid out of the booth. "Later Donny."

Janet and I danced close while Teddy and Leon drove off into the night, my heart racing ahead of even them. "Now I owe you one." I said. "We're even Donny, all even." she whispered as she rested her head on my shoulder. After about 40 minutes of

dancing to songs I don't think either of us heard, Janet and I left the Pub. The weather had gotten worse. High winds blew the snow horizontally, stacking it up against the west-facing side of everything in sight. The radio report set the temperature at 4 degrees, the wind-chill set it at about 20 below. The city road crews were shooting sand and salt out from the undersides of their trucks in a frantic effort to keep the roads clear. "They were driving to Pittsfield in this?" Janet asked no one in particular, "I guess they really are crazy." I was a little too busy trying to drive to keep up a good conversation. "Yeah, really crazy." I added.

It was late when we finally rolled into Janet's driveway. It was easy to feel the extra weight of the situation at hand. All of the times we had driven and rode together, all of them crammed into the car all at once. Something had to be said by someone. Janet slid across the seat and held my right hand, which always sits unattended on the seat when I drive because I'm lefthanded, and kissed me lightly on the cheek. "It's taken a long time to get here," she whispered. "Well," I started, "...with the roads and all..." "I didn't mean the driving, Donny" she said as she kissed me again and slowly slid out of the car. I watched her walk up to her door, unlock it, and step inside. She turned and waved, then watched as I backed out of her twisting driveway and crept home.

I emptied my pockets onto my dresser and held the key ring up to the light. The word "Schwinn" had long ago worn away, as so many other things had. I slept soundly that night, kept warm by three blankets and my cat, as I dreamed about the bomb, Janet, my bike and screaming sirens.

Why they fell through the ice was easy enough to figure; the van was too heavy. The thing no one could figure out was why they were on the ice in the first place. The police scuba divers recovered three bodies from the sunken van two days after the accident. The third man was identified as Teddy's uncle. The other two were of course, Teddy and Leon. The police wouldn't tell the papers much about the case because of something that was found in the van, but they did say that the tire tracks indicated that the boys were on the ice for quite awhile. I could easily picture Teddy at the wheel, sitting on his extra pillow, gleefully doing donuts on the frozen pond that was two miles down the road from his uncle's place. Another thing that the police told the press was that Teddy and Leon were probably alive in the sunken, nearly air-tight van for 4 to 6 hours before the cold and the small leaks finally got them. It was reported that Leon's

fingertips were worn through to the bone. The divers said that this was common in these accidents, when the victims panic and try to claw their way out of the wreckage. Leon must have given-up because he and Teddy were recovered, ice-cold, arm in arm. Teddy's uncle apparently died when the ice collapsed. He had a broken neck.

We don't go to the Pub anymore. We did once, just a week after the world found out about what had happened. I was shocked to see that no one in the bar seemed to care. No one noticed that the short guy and his geek buddy were missing. Sitting in a side booth, Janet and I stared at Teddy's old seat. The stool was occupied by some dark haired girl wearing hoop earrings. Leon's spot right beside the chair was filled by some guy who seemed to be moving in on the girl with the hoops. Janet and I just sat, not saying a word. We didn't stay long.

These days Janet and I and most of our friends go to a bigger, slightly louder bar. The bands are usually better than the ones we endured at the Pub. The drinks are a little more expensive, and the crowds are a little rowdier. Now that Teddy and Leon are gone, Janet and I have time to talk about more important things than their degree of weirdness. We talk a lot, and spend most of our time together. We dance slower and closer each day.

## Tom O'Connor



Photo by Margaret McClung

## Untitled

Although you are just time away  
It seems forever to see you.  
My head is spinning,  
All I want is for us to be happy.  
When we are apart I want you so much  
And when we are together  
I want so much to give you all I can.  
But the fear;  
The fear of loving you  
As much as I want to, I can't.  
Its wrong — for both of us  
So much of our lives have been  
With the one we . . . (love)?  
I just want you to know  
That in my heart  
There is always a space for you.  
Even though I can't tell you  
How much I feel for you  
I had to let you know, because  
"I do love you."

**Andrea G. Shapiro**

## Un-Fairy Tale

On a specific Monday (because I live in time)  
there was a woman (I am not royal yet)  
who sought the man for her (you?)  
and she tried marrying (you will not be coerced, I learned);  
but she was restless in that time.

"Please, in a most specific time,  
seek me," she said.  
"Find me on a Definite Day,  
in Clearly Designated Space."

And so he did:  
On Wednesday morning  
when she stooped beside the pansy bed,  
removing old and wilting blooms  
and pulling out the jimson weeds,  
she was astounded that someone  
then sought her from the other side.

But when she heard his voice,  
she flew (fast as my sandals would allow)  
to him who found her  
(in a most specific Now).

Fran MacPherson

## The Run

He rose early that morning hoping to convulse the sleep from his body and the events of the night before from his mind. He pulled on a wool sweater, the one Janette had given him last Christmas, and walked over to pick up a pair of dirty grey sweats piled on the floor. He found his new Addidas under the bed and slipped them on. His eyes danced around the apartment; an ashtray filled with cigarette butts sat on the floor, two wine glasses — one half-full and the other empty balanced delicately on the coffee table. He shivered and walked over to shut the window, which he did not remember leaving open. Daniel took a deep breath; he could still smell her perfume; he reflected his thoughts for a moment. As he began to walk across the room his eyes clouded. He stepped on the ashtray which littered its contents on the floor. He slammed the front door.

As the cold air filled his lungs and then was exhaled at an even steady pace, Daniels Blank began to wake up. He glanced at his watch: 6:45. He did not think he was up to his usual ten miles but what else did he have to do? The leaves beneath his feet were rotten and dead. Like running on eggshells. His lips were dry and chapped; the cold wind burned his throat. With a great surge of energy he accelerated his pace, running, running, farther away from West 84 St. He tensed and relaxed with every step, performing perfectly. And so the body of Daniel Blank ran down Madison Avenue, while his mind was making love to Janette, at home in the bed they once shared. He could not keep the tears from rolling off his face and on to the dead, cold ground.

Dana Goodman

## Your Eyes

Your eyes hold me spellbound  
As if hypnotized by your straight  
foreward gaze  
Spellbound in the dark recesses of your mind

Your eyes hold me captive  
A willing prisoner to whatever my sentence  
may be

Your eyes see all, feel all, are all  
The wisdom and knowledge of the heavens  
around us  
Find a resting place in the reflection of your eyes

**Rosie Rosenberg**



Robert Massotti

## Rice and Chocolate Sauce

The long duration of the first world war left its imprint on the health and appearance of the children of Budapest. They were thin, undernourished with tubercular rosy cheeks. The shelves in the grocery stores were empty, and still the que remained long and steadfast; people were hoping that food supplies would be replenished. The black market flowered; people with connections and with goods to barter were well supplied. There were times when nothing was available. Even gold was worthless, it had only intrinsic value.

After the treaty of Versailles, the American Relief Agencies began to feed the starving children of Europe. The agencies were coordinated by Herbert Hoover. They fed me.

My story happened during the year of 1920. Our cupboard was empty as usual. Famine was the style of the day. Most of the time my mother was able to barter for food. She knew every trick how to subtract food for the family, and still we fell on hungry times. Our backlog of rum and the sacks of salt was used up. Bricquets for heating was also gone. My uncle Jeno was gone; his whereabouts were unknown. The supplies taken from the army kitchens wasn't available. We were hungry this time. Government allocations, every so often provided us with powdered milk and corn meal.

I was a student in the fourth grade, in an all boy's school. It was an edifice of large granite blocks, lending an appearance of an institution. The rooms were spacious; poorly illuminated with hanging cord lights. Dispensing hardly enough light for reading. Studying was a chore instead of an adventure in learning. Panges of hunger kept our minds from education. Still, school boy pranks were the order of the day. Spit balls flew and the teachers were the buffs of good and bad jokes.

We attended school, and bundled in all kinds of clothing; we carried our books and supplies in knap sacks. We withstood the hunger and the problems that the war bestowed on us.

One dreary cold day, the class room was unheated; the old goat, our principal came to our room. We jumped to attention. He began to speak slowly, with the aire of a pedagogue, "boys, line up against the wall in single file. Let's show our friends that you are disciplined children. They have a surprise for you."

We lined up behind the other boys, forming a snake all the way down four flights into the basement. The line became shorter and

shorter, and finally we were on the first landing near the basement entrance. Sweet smells of cooking arose from the bowels of the school. The boys became hungrier and more anxious with each step. We saw what was going on. In the back cellar, tables were set up where the boys were gorging themselves. Eating made this a joyous and quiet occasion.

The center of the cellar held three army caldrons, spewing hot steam into the icy air. The boys were standing with metal plates and spoons. When they approached the lady she said something in a strange language. Each boy was given a heaped ladle full of cooked rice. The lady at the next caldron poured on a healthy amount of a syrupy sauce. It was chocolate sauce. I found a place nearby to gorge myself with this treat. This day none of the boys complained of a stomachache.

The rice had the consistence of fluff; it was like edible snow with swirls of hot chocolate sauce, giving an appearance of hot fudge sundae. The first spoonful was the real treat. It was hot, but the rice quickly cooled to enjoyment. My belly swelled to a pleasant size. It didn't take me too long to run and tell my mother the wonderful lunch we were given.

My mother must of said to herself, "how easy it is to satisfy a little boy."

Even now, when I eat a chef's delight I recall the place of rice smothered with hot chocolate sauce.

**Ben Schiffman**

## Untitled

The silence in this world  
When it comes to end  
Shall be the whispers  
Of an unfaithful friend  
And if you meet me  
In the darkened world  
You'll see my sails  
Are yet unfurled  
I shall then set upon the sea  
And then my friend  
There will be only me  
For this world has been so cold  
That friend or foe be bought or sold  
And when the time comes  
For me to go  
I'll send a message and all shall know . . .

I shall write no more.

**Scott Rudolph**

He said he'd call at eleven that night. It was 11:10 and I was having a heart attack. I was just about sitting on the phone because I had to pick it up on the first ring. My parents were fast asleep. I had already gone through 2 packs of cigarettes and I had one cigarette saved for the phone call. But I smoked that nine minutes ago. Finally 11:20 the phone rings. It's him! He wants me to come for the weekend. I quickly call Long Island Railroad to find out the schedule to New York City. Then I called Grand Central Station for the next train leaving for Amherst, Mass. In one half hour; I tweezed my eyebrows, showered, blow dried my hair, shaved my legs, put on makeup, polished my nails, packed my bags, and I was off for one glorious weekend in heaven. My taxi on schedule got me to the railroad. "That will be \$2.50 please." "Thank you, keep the change," as I fell out of the cab. Waiting at the depot I thought I would die. My train was 20 minutes late. I'd have to catch a later train in the city. What a pleasant ride I had on the Long Island Railroad! The best thing I could say about it was I made a new friend, although his conversation bored me to death. He invited me to join him a T.M. meeting if I missed my train. I said, "Later for that." The train in front of us broke down and I had to sit with this guy for an hour! Finally I arrived in New York City and called Grand Central Station for a later train. I then booked into the first cab I saw. I was aided by a helpful black man who placed my suitcase in the cab, and then proceeded to ask me for 50 cents. I said, "Later to that," also. Of course, we got stuck in traffic and that meter just kept ticking away. I stepped out of the cab, rushing to Grand Central Station, tripped over my pants, fell on my suitcase in the middle of the street and felt like a fool. I ran to the ticket office only to find I was at the wrong station. I quickly hailed another cab. "Port Authority, and make it fast." "That'll be \$2.50 please." "Keep the change," I said. My funds were rapidly disappearing. Happily, at my destination with ten minutes to spare, I found I was still at the wrong state. Well, it was a lovely night for a cab ride anyway. There I was back at Penn Station where I had started out originally. My pockets were just about empty and my mental state was frizzle-frazzled. This time I only laughed whey they told me my train was delayed 45 minutes. I had a coke and watched the bums fall asleep. Two-thirty I boarded my savior train for a lovely 3 1/2 hour ride. I quickly made friends with a shy guy sitting next to me who I thought I overwhelmed with my bubbling personality. I

dragged him into the piano bar which I was totally excited about entering for my first time. I had read so many glamorous things about places like that in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. It was Christmas vacation and everyone was in a cheery mood, to say the very least! I talked my shy friend into buying me a drink and then he quietly slipped back to his seat. By then I had made 10 new friends in the bar and we were having a great time. We sang Christmas songs while someone played the piano. Everyone got really close and really drunk. Now that I was having such a good time the conductor called "last stop Amherst!" I kissed all my friends good-bye, I stepped off the train and there he was, my dream man. I ran into his arms. He asked me, "How was your trip Honey?" "Oh, nothing unusual, I slept most of the way," and I smiled that smile he loves.

### Curry grad

I  
am me.  
To be me,  
Is to be happy.  
To be happy is vital.  
Vital is my life,  
As I am,  
Me

LD

## Crystalized

Crystal earring catches my eye,  
Little rainbows, as you walk by.  
Can you see me? I see your ear.  
Reflecting the light, for me to hear.

Dazzling beams, you don't even know,  
Your spotlights search the humans below.  
Floating above me, your landing lights glow.  
Waiting to land, yet only I know.

Then you leave never knowing,  
Your lights in my head.  
Never suspecting I heard what they said.

Spotlights still searching,  
The way that they should.  
But no one will hear them the way that I could.

Tom O'Connor



Photo by Bill Littlefield

## A Good Day with Robert J.

(Note: Mr. Pomp-Adore speaks lowly and haltingly. His many pauses are seldom at the end of a sentence, let alone at the end of a word or even a syllable. They are distributed in a manner similar to that of stresses in atonal compositions.)

"This is Robert J. Pomp-Adore Jr. bringing you Morning Pro Musica Antic-a. Today's guest is Boston's beloved maestro Arthur 'Kleine' Kitsch' Lieder. May I call you 'Kleine'?"

"Call me what you will."

"Kleine, welcome to Morning Pro Musica Antic-a. What influenced you most in your long and distinguished career as maestro of the B.S.O., the Boston Schnapps Orchestra, and as found of Muzak Inc.?"

"Moolah."

"Gustaf Mahler?"

"Moolah."

"It's funny that you mentioned that. I was sitting out on the Serenat lawn — with special permission of the Koussevitzky Estate — along with Virgil and Aaron —

"Stumblebums."

"Thomson and Copeland?"

"Koussevitzky, too. Him, too. Died insolvent, almost as broke as Bartok. Deadbeats. Not worth their weight in orange juice."

"Well, we were sitting out there on that magnificent lawn sipping Calvados — pomme de jacques, as our American friends would have it — and someone (perhaps Aaron) said he or she was reading Proust —

"Who?"

"Proust. Marrrcel Prrroust. And he mentioned that petit phrase in *A Cote de Swann* which Marcel attributes to one Vinteuil. And then — ecce homo! — Virgil said he was positive it was the exact phrase in the opening bars of Gustaf Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Well, just yesterday I was sitting in the Esplanade listening to your incomparable rendition of John Phillip Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever* (which you will be pleased to hear we have played on Morning Pro Musica Antic-a more times than any other piece) when voila, that petit phrase emerged and just would not go away. Mahler embedded in Sousa."

"Strange bedfellows. But that's got to be better than finding a Handel, a Piston, a Bloch, Haydn in a Kreisler."

"Heh, heh. You know Sousa was born six years before Mahler, yet lived a full 21 years after his death."

"How about that?"

"And their birthdays —

"You pay a lot of attention to birthdays, don't you, Robert J.?"  
When was your birthday, anyway?"

"I thought everyone knew."

"When?"

"December 25."

"I should have known."

"Well, anyway, Kleine, what was I to do with that Mahler phrase lodged forever, if you will, inside *Stars and Stripes Forever*? What to do about that remarkable concatenation?"

"Try Raid. That's what I use on my carpenter ants."

"Tantes de menuisier."

"Fourmis! Fourmis!"

"For you, for me, for everyone." (Lieder groans.) "Maestro, are you still hard at work on you life work, your magnum opus? The cognoscenti of our audience will know at once that the maestro has devoted over three decades to transcribing Johann Sebastian Bach's entire keyboard repertory for the player piano and wind chimes."

"Still at work."

"Any problems?"

"The hardest thing is to get it all into polka tempo."

"I see. And the premier performance is still scheduled for the 300th anniversary of Bach's birthday?"

"Yes."

"Soloist? Well, of course you won't be using any."

"Player piano by F.A.O. Schwartz — a new wind-up kind; and chimes by Child World."

"We look forward to it, Kleine. We have been talking with Maestro Arthur Kleine Kitsch Lieder, long-time conductor of the Boston Schnapps, founder of Muzak Inc., and tiresome interpreter of Great Music for the masses." (Pause.) "Today, as you know, is Iceland Independence Day. Thorvald Rasmussen — the gray eminence of nineteenth and twentieth century Iceland music — was born in Reykjavik in 1842 and died in Denmark — on the continent, or incontinent so to speak — in 1941, leaving fifteen symphonies and at least forty string quartets. In 1957 Jean Julius Christian Sibelius took an arctic cruise, stopped off at Reykjavik, listened to just 24 bars of Rasmussen's last symphony, and died of apoplexy. A listener wrote in and suggested — rather

arrogantly I thought — that today being also National Layer Hen Day we play only Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, that being the most productive music to play for laying hens. Well, of course, Iceland does have several thousand layer hens, but Rasmussen and his students cannot be slighted, given the bird, so to speak. Je ne veux pas les donner l'oiseau. Jamais. Another listener called in to say that in a recent poll in Reykjavik, Icelanders prefer Mozart to Rasmussen 191,000 to 0, but your host, Robert J. Pomp-Adore Jr. cannot permit that kind of flash figure to sway him." (Five hours of music by Rasmussen and his students pass by.) "Tomorrow is Authority Day and to honor our President we will begin with 'Hail to the Chief'; then play some local color music like 'Don't Fence Me In' and 'Home on the Range'; go on to play both the Eroica Symphony and the Emperor's Concerto by Beethoven as well as an aria from Verdi's 'Aida' (the king's 'Sul del Nilo al sacro . . . — 'Guard the sacred Nile from the bold invading horde!'); and conclude with a special treat, the entire musical score from the movie *Bedtime for Bonzo*. Thank you for bearing with me on Station Robert J. Pomp-Adore Jr."

**Marvin Mandell**

### desert threat

what are you?  
a sacred cow?  
do not snap  
your hairy tail at me!  
i'll just pick my olives somewhere  
else.

**Nancy R. Levey**

## Sunnyside or Scrambled?

Finding seclusion is  
Seeking desolation,  
Releasing yourself from  
Others bonds.  
Separate parties  
Never connecting,  
Wandering bodies reaching  
Without formulating.

The rose that's plucked  
Before it has fully bloomed  
Is stripped of reaching  
Its total potential.  
Like all of us that never  
Had the opportunity to develop  
And inidate our minds  
With totality of spirit.

Finding seclusion is  
Seeking desolation.  
A loneliness achieved  
Through desire.  
One chooses silence as one  
May pull the trigger on life.

**L.C. Austin**

## Twelve Ways

Twelve months revolved  
And I have learned  
Twelve different ways to love,  
Each false within a different time,  
But in its own time, true.

**Fran MacPherson**

## A Hunger

Among furrowed fields where scarecrows stand,  
A hunger rings inside a man.  
Desire hallucinates in him, his nightdreams  
Flashing. He feels their pins and needles sting.

His theonomous mind is fed by land  
And the Good Book. But ah . . . , there is more  
To crave for; picking apples in tabued fields  
Where howling hounds snarl at each grasping hand!

The fertile lands around are there to bear  
His food. By planting seeds he might bring harvest,  
But himself, a seed, must now find a fruitful  
Patch where he can grow, unconstrained in nature.

He feels that as she appears from nowhere,  
A basket in her hands. A drumbeat rolls  
Through heart and veins so that his heated self  
Can not stop the seizure stripping sense away.

So languishing with plow in hand, he stares  
Until she skips away. Soft footprints etched  
In dirt are all that linger for him. Can  
His strangled impulse ever now be nurtured?

Reaction will not mirror his impulse.  
Bovinely he turns his plow towards the  
Scarecrow. Their shadows come together like  
Two rustic friends at sunset trudging home.

Michael R. Hagerty

## This Owl Creek Bridge

At a cross roads of sorts,

I stop at the bridge.  
Turning left,  
glancing right,  
I notice the bridge is loosening.  
This bridge is shaking with each strong gust of wind.  
In a few months the bridge will finally collapse.

The building inspector will be  
called in to determine the cause of death —  
As in all cases before.

Jo'Anne M. Kelly

# Suspended Animation

It was another Wednesday night charade. Children, grandchildren, friends, and in-laws were once again gathered to nervously witness the play. They sat around the dining room table silently praying that all would go smoothly; hoping there would be no awkward silences or embarrassing dialogue between the two main characters. Joseph and Anne sat on opposite ends of the long table. A platter of roast beef, some rolls, a bottle of wine, and eight years came between them.

Joseph had not been specifically called to the table. He had been sitting in the living room reading the paper. He realized that the meal was ready when he heard everyone gathering in the dining room. Unobtrusively slipping into his seat, he seized the closest dish to him, and scooped out some salad for himself. He then patiently waited until it was within his reach. He didn't want to trouble anyone by asking them to pass him the food.

Anne presided over the other end of the table. Any other night she would have been out having lobster at a restaurant with her friends. For about ten years now though, she had been having "Wednesday night dinner" for the kids, and it had come to be expected of her. All of her life she had been doing things for others. She couldn't completely break away from that pattern. She had taken care of her parents until they had died. She had taken care of all of her children until they were grown. And she had taken care of her husband until she had had enough. Now it was her turn to live. She went out as much as possible. She bought whatever she wanted, and she had her hair done every Saturday morning. People talked about her. She knew they called her a bitch, but she didn't give a damn. They were the same ones who had been walking all over her for the last thirty years. Her contempt for them grew, and she defiantly drained her glass of wine. She reached for the bottle, and refilled her glass purposefully.

Joseph noticed her deliberate action, and the challenge in her eyes as she glanced his way. The muscles in his jaw tensed as he ground his teeth into the piece of roast beef in his mouth. It was a reflex action that he quickly checked. A scene from a night thirty years ago when his army "buddies" had forced a pint of whiskey down his throat briefly flashed through his mind. He hadn't touched a drop of liquor since then. He silently looked on as Anne downed her fourth glass of wine.

As he glanced around the table, Joseph realized that he hadn't been contributing anything to the light banter of dinner conversation. He searched his mind for something to say. He couldn't think of anything. In desperation, he scanned the room. His eye fixed on an old antique flat iron that he had cleaned up and placed in front of one of the French doors as a stop. To no one in particular, he said, "How do you like the old flat iron that I fixed up over there?" A slightly surprised, but polite murmur of accord went around the table.

"What did you do to it?" Anne questioned sharply.

"I cleaned it up and sanded it down in the shop. I thought it would make a good doorstop," Joseph answered tentatively.

"You ruined it," came the flat reply. It was like a slap in the face.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I said. You ruined it."

"How?"

"You took the handle off. What did you do with it?"

"It never had one."

"Well find one for it then!"

"The iron never had a handle," Joseph laughed nervously. It was a stupid answer, but it was the only thing that he could manage to get out. The unreasonable command had totally floored him. He looked around the table. All seemed to be unusually preoccupied with the food on their plates. He finished his meal in embarrassed silence, and quickly excused himself. He could almost feel the room sigh with relief as he stepped out of its confines. Anne began to describe a "fantastic" new restaurant that she had tried the other night. Joseph turned the television on, and his wife's enthusiasm was drowned out by John Chancellor with the latest news of the "Iranian Crisis."

Joseph must have dozed off. He awoke to hear the last dinner guest depart. Moments later, he heard Anne come down the stairs from her bedroom. He looked up to see that she had her new fur coat on, and her makeup had been carefully touched up. She looked lovely as always. He wanted to tell her. As she walked by, he called her. "Are you going out?" The door slammed in reply . . .

"Have a good time," he whispered.

The words seemed to echo a thousand times against the walls of the empty house.

Sue Keith

## Her Dream

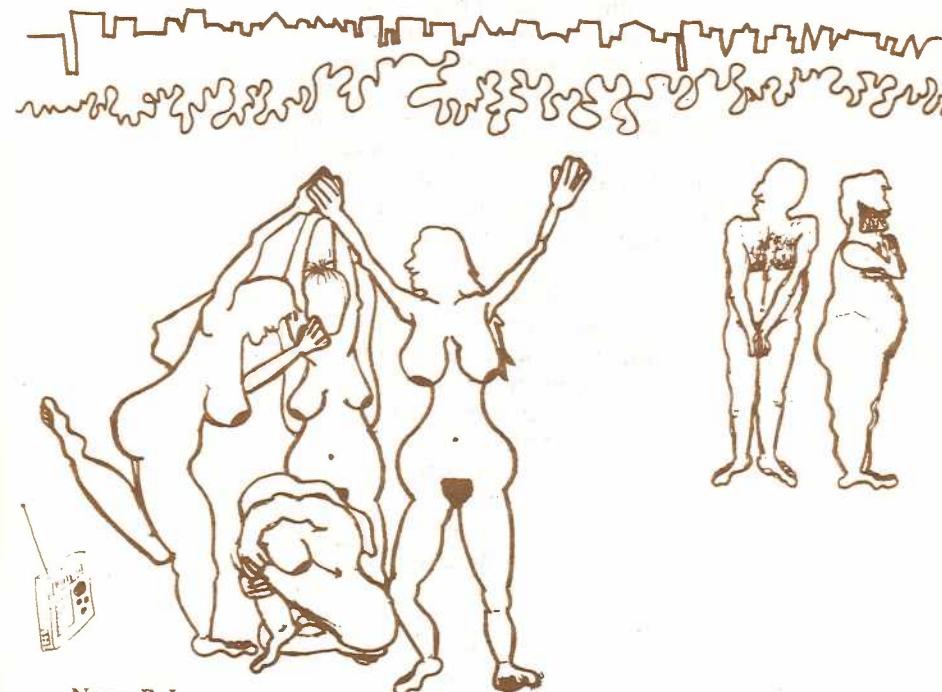
A small boy is journeying along a dusty country dirt road, bordered with deep beautiful woods, at the height of summer. A man who may be his father walks beside him. Their communication is wordless, marvelous, complete. The road is lined with tall trees in full green leaf, the dusty gray-green of late summer foliage, of August. The sun is shining brilliantly. Dust motes fill the bars of streaming light. The sun is beating down: pleasurable, the boy feels that invisible warmth and power spread throughout his body. I am this little boy. The man who walks beside me may be my father. We are walking together to the river where something wonderful is supposed to take place.

The boy is innocent, confident, trustful. The older man is his guide, his friend, and—I am this grown man. When we reach the river, the boy finds himself imprisoned in a bamboo cage, where he is hunched over. He feels shock, pain, betraya. The man who has led him here does nothing, can do nothing. The boy weeps in angry disappointment. A woman appears. She seems to have emerged from the land and the sky and the river. She is alive, but larger than life—she is real, but immortal, somehow—somehow, beyond death.

She is robed in white, in classical simplicity—the most powerful, beautiful, regal woman that I have ever seen. She is like the statues of the gods or the saints, except that she is full of power and energy and light. She reminds me of the risen Christ. She frees the boy from his cage. She will be his guide, his protector, his friend. She will show him the meaning of the river's promise. She—who is God; who is woman; who is human. She...who is...myself.

Carol Hudson-Martin

Four in Park



Nancy R. Levey

FOUR IN PARK

# Kites

No  
Longer  
can I soar  
my kite. It caught  
a treetop late last  
night. I had it high — a  
hundred feet or more, but  
then it caught and cease to  
soar. It was just string that caught  
the limb. The kite soared on without a  
whim. It soared all day and soared all  
night, majestic wonder in self-flight.  
But one more wind blew hard and long  
and sent my kite back to Hong  
Kong. But I'll adjust and a-  
wake at dawn — to buy the  
best from ole Taiwan.  
March winds already gone.  
April showers now  
have dawned, But  
no more wind  
to fly my kite  
so now  
I'll never  
hit my heights.  
Here  
lies  
the  
end of  
my tale  
and also  
THE END  
of my tail.

Laurent Lafontaine

I walked into the bar with apprehension, I was early — as I always had been in the past. I just have this thing about getting there before you.

The heavy oak doors opened into a large room. The walls, too, were of dark oak, dotted with old-fashion railroad lanterns. There were twice as many tables as people, with a few men sitting at the bar. I made my way over to a corner booth, so we wouldn't be the center of attention — God forbid. I sat down, leaving my coat on. (I always leave it on until you come.) I ordered my usual rum and Coke, nervously tapping the glass with the swizzel stick.

The oak doors swung open and you walked in. My initial nervousness disappeared. You spotted me right away, looking immediately to the "out of the way" places. You sat down and gave me a kiss.

(The smell of your cologne sent me back to the first time we kissed. We had been friends for four years and had gone out on casual dates from time to time. But that night, things were different. You looked different and you were acting somewhat nervously, which wasn't like you. We got into the car and you looked at me and said "May I kiss you?" I thought it was a very strange question — our relationship was strictly non-physical. (With good reason). I casually said "What the Hell." (I didn't want to sound nervous or scared — which in fact I was both. Well, I got a lot more of a kiss than I expected. It kind of threw me at first, but I had definitely enjoyed it.

Since that first kiss our relationship has changed so much. For better or for worse, I'm not sure. I don't see you any more than I did before — about once every two months. But when I do see you, it means so much more.

We always have a good time when we go out — you make me laugh, hold me when I cry — you understand me.

But, I love you and that hurts me more than anything. The more I see you the more I want you all the time. I don't want to have to kiss you good bye after a night out. Every time we go out, it takes me longer and longer to forget about you until next time. So many times I have wanted to call you at home and knew that I couldn't. I know that some night I'll be waiting for you and you won't show up. But with all these things running through my head, there is no way I could ever leave you. I don't want to end it — as much as it hurts.)

I realized I had been daydreaming and I turned to you. You were staring at me.

"My wife knows — Jean knows."

The words came at me — those words I had dreaded hearing. It was as if you had read my mind. I was speechless. You got up, bent over, kissed my forehead, and turned and left the bar. And me, I spent the rest of that night in that corner booth — missing you.

L.D.

Are you smart?  
Are you stupid?  
Are you something inbetween?  
Who judges?  
Who is right?  
Do you know who you are?  
Why degrade?  
Why hurt?  
Do you need that self-assurance?  
Are you fighting?  
Are you winning?  
Will this beginning have an end?  
Do I need you?  
Would it bleed you?  
Do you care?  
Are you there?

**Janet Tedeschi**

# Patrick — Freedom

## Part 1

Patrick sat on the steps in front of his house, watching the people passby. There were business men late from their lunch hours, teenagers from the nearby school, and occasionally a house-wife on her way to Market. Patrick sighed and rested his cheek against his arms as they clutched his denim clad knees.

"Pat-rick!" A loud voice came from inside. Patrick sighed again, stood, and went into the house. The voice had been his mother. She stood in a pink flowered shift, frowning. Her soft hair framed a very severe face. "Where is your jacket?" She asked sternly.

"U-up in m-my room." Patrick answered slowly.

"Patrick, it's cold and you need your jacket! How would you like to catch a cold? You wouldn't like that would you?" Patrick silently shook his head. Satisfied she had done the right thing, his mother sent Patrick upstairs to his room to get his jacket. When Patrick reached his room, he went in and closed the door. He reached under his mattress, and found the paper he wanted. He quickly glanced about to be sure no one was watching, and carefully unfolded the paper. He knew what it said by heart, but it gave him a comfort to see it in print.

"Congratulations," it said. "You have won third prize, two majestic, graceful doves. Come to 'Fitzpatrick's Pet Shoppe' and claim your prize."

Patrick closed his eyes and smiled. In his mind's eye he could see the birds, and almost hear their soft coo's. His happy reverie was interrupted by a sharp "Patrick!" His eyes snapped open to see his mother standing in the doorway.

"M-mom!" He spluttered in anger, surprised. His mother stood tapping her foot impatiently.

"You and I have an appointment with Mrs. Kensey at the school. Put on your jacket and let's go." Silently he obeyed, leaving the paper on his desk.

The school was three blocks away. His mother walked quickly, her heels making a sharp clicking sound against the pavement. With Patrick's hand firmly clenched in her own, she entered the school and Mrs. Kensey's office. Mrs. Kensey was a small woman with a warm and friendly face. Patrick stood quietly as the two women discussed him. Phrases like 'mentally retarded', and

'slow learner', met his ears but he chose not to listen. He went to the window, and stood gazing outside. Overhead the sun shone brightly in the clear, blue sky. Patrick watched a flock of birds fly by on their way South. He stood, stared, and daydreamed, until his mother rose to leave. "Come Patrick," She took his hand and practically dragged him home. Upon his arrival home, he went up to his room.

The sound of hysterical gasps, cries, and sobs drew Patrick's mother upstairs. She found Patrick rocking, and shaking over a small pile of shredded paper. She reached Patrick and held him close.

"There, there," she murmured. After a few minutes, the sobs subsided. "I'm sure Cinnabar didn't mean to do that," she told him gently. (Cinnabar was their Siamese cat, with one blue eye, and one brown.) "Now, what was on that paper that made it so important?" Slowly Patrick told her. "Tell you what," she said. "Let's go down to the pet store, explain what happened, and see if we can't get those birds!" Patrick happily nodded.

## Part 2

Two white doves sat quietly in their cage. Patrick gazed at them, marveling at any of their movements. He had named them the moment he had gotten them, Kathleen, after his mother, and Lancelot. He spent every waking moment with his doves, and at night he dreamed of doves. He wondered what it would be like to fly. That night he had a dream that his arms had become wings, and he had flown through the sky with Kathleen and Lancelot. They had gone to a magical land with crystal waterfalls, and huge rainbows. The grass, flowers, and trees all could speak and told him many things, the location of buried treasure, and how to save the beautiful princess from the fire-breathing dragon. Patrick was just raising his sword, when something landed BUMP on his chest.

"Cinnabar! G-get!" Angerily he pushed the cat off his bed. Regally Cinnabar walked from the room. With a grunt Patrick rolled over to go to sleep again.

The next morning at breakfast, his mother informed him that she had a hairdresser's appointment that afternoon, and she would leave a key in the mailbox. Patrick nodded, finished breakfast, and left with his mother gripping his hand. After dropping Patrick off, she went on her way.

The dismissal bell rang and Patrick ran home to see his birds.

He quickly ran up to his room, and over to the birdcage. The door was open, and Lancelot was perched in the corner of the room. Frantically Patrick began to search for Kathleen. Under his bed, he found her small, battered body. Blood stained her feathers a dark red, and she looked CHEWED!

At that moment Cinnabar flew out of the closet, and ran down-stairs. Patrick looked at the dead bird, and at once knew. He began to shake as sorrow raked his whole body. His mother found him there, sobbing in pain. She held him, took the dead bird out of his grip, and tried to comfort him. Patrick pulled out of her arms, grabbed the cage with Lancelot in it, and ran out into the night.

"Patrick! Patrick, come back!" His mother ordered, but it fell on deaf ears as Patrick continued to run. Blinded by tears of sorrow and pain, he ran madly into the woods.

### Part 3

Patrick's eyes slowly opened and looked around in surprise. Where am I? He wondered. Around him in all directions was more and more woods. He shivered slightly, and hugged himself. Now awake, he realized he was hungry. Wandering around he soon found a small bush dotted with bright, round, berries. He picked one and studied it. After smelling, and licking it, he popped it in his mouth. A sweet, sharp, taste filled his mouth, and he happily recognized blackberries. Eagerly he ate up the rest. No longer hungry, he took up Lancelot's cage.

"Now wh-wh-what way sh-shall we g-go?" He asked the bird. Lancelot flew around in a circle, rested on his perch, and cocked his head at Patrick. Patrick laughed, and with the cage, walked away. He wandered about the rest of the day until weary, he stopped in a small clearing. The sun was going down and the wood's came alive with shadows and noise. Patrick thought about lions, tigers, or any wild animal, and felt fear. Quickly he decided to build a fire. He put sticks and dry leaves in a small pile. With two sticks, he got fire, and soon the pile blazed. His smudged face shone in the fire light, as he proudly settled back to sleep.

He was awakened by a low growling sound, and heavy rustling. His heart pounded in his chest. The fire had died down, and was now just a pile of smoldering ash. Patrick felt terror growing, and he badly wanted his mother. Lancelot chirped and flew around the cage. That gave Patrick an idea. Standing, he began

to shout, yell and succeeded in scaring what ever it was, away. A new feeling grew inside him, warming him to the tip of his toes. I did good! He thought. I did — me! With great happiness and pride he went back to sleep.

### Part 4

That morning they found him. Cold, dirty, hungry, but alive. They also found some fresh bear tracks near-by, and wondered. Patrick's mother couldn't stop thanking the forester, who blushed and stammered it was all in a day's work. When Patrick arrived home, he had his head held high. His mother began to fuss over him. Patrick let her for awhile, but then he said,

"M-mother please s-st-stop." The firmness of his tone surprised her. She looked into the boy's face, and found a man's instead. She then watched him take the birdcage outdoors. The sun was setting, and the sky had become a beautiful purple with light orange and pink. She watched Patrick open the cage door, and take out the dove.

"Fly free Lancelot," he said quietly, and tossed the bird into the sky. His mother felt her eyes sting with tears as she watched.

## Rosie Rosenberg

# Seasonal Outbursts

I

Some use traces of ivory  
towers to wash away social  
madness.

II

Others just sit behind the  
Wheel and let it all happen.

III

Regardless of the decisions  
made, the outcome may always  
remain the same.

IV

Cannon sounds along the shore,  
while waves rush amongst granular  
survivors.

V

Finger nails carve traces of  
relationship along the fine  
of your back.

VI

Remembrances of forgotten pastles  
smeared along yellowing paper.

VII

Is it the rotting flowers or  
the stench of powder gone by  
on wooden surroundings?

VIII

Or the continuing of earth revolving  
around us in consistent revolutions?

L.C.A.

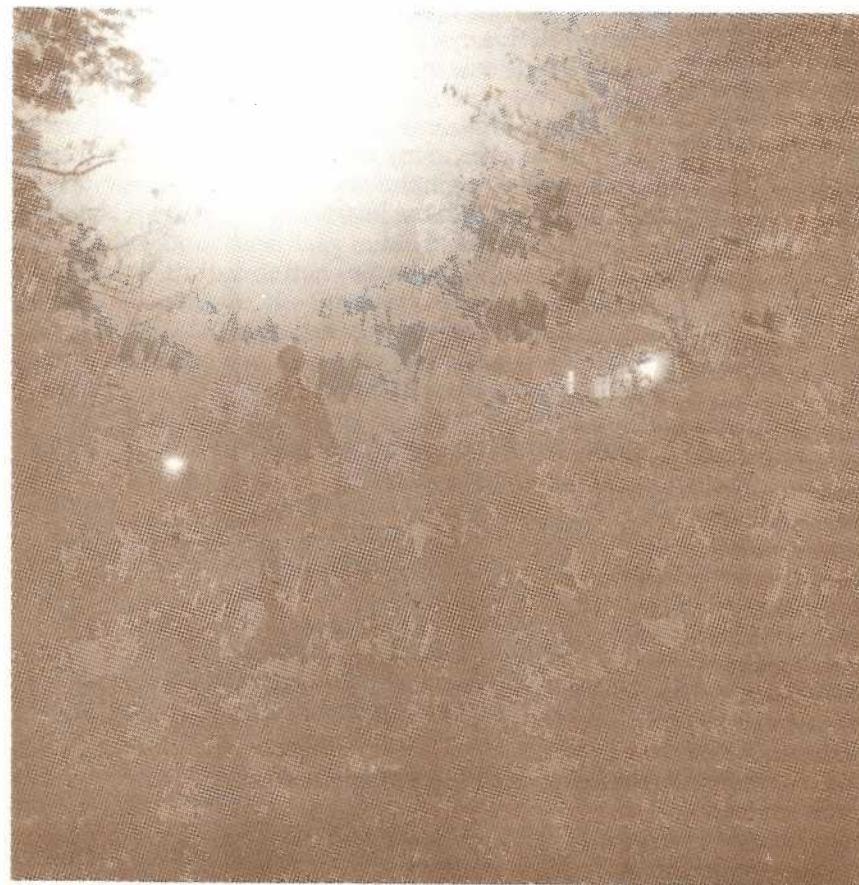


Photo by Paul Butler White

## Untitled

I bid farewell this eve to him  
whose laughter is my strength;  
lone stance re-echos shadowed gloom  
till darkness hides my face.  
From inner reaches of my mind,  
no sobs will wrench this soul;  
nor do pangs disturb the heart  
wherein lie times of old.  
A slumber swiftly covers me  
and takes me by surprize;  
within a dream, I fain do see  
my sleeping prince's eyes.  
He speaks to me in quiet tones  
and soothes me with his charms.  
One final touch; one last embrace —  
he takes me in his arms.  
Too soon I wake from out my dream;  
yea, ere the morn is near  
— but, hark! "Fear not, I sleep in peace,"  
is whispered in my ear.  
I bade farewell last eve to him  
whose laughter was my strength;  
lone stance is chased from shadowed gloom  
when daylight finds my face.

Nancy Rita Lazzaro

In the early morning, pre-dawn haze over the Kremlin in Russia, a half-dozen American B-52 bombers fly in tight formation. Having flown in low, under the Soviet radar, they circle once then dive for their target and prepare to release their cargo. The attack is completely unprovoked and takes the Russian population by surprise. No one is prepared for the onslaught and millions of lives are at stake. Finally, at the precise second, the bombay doors are opened, the signal is given and the American planes release millions of red, white and blue ping-pong balls onto the unsuspecting Soviet capital.

Thousands of miles away, Washington, D.C., is wallowing through another day of bureaucratic bustle and hustle. Washingtonians go about their daily business in our nation's capital, oblivious to the terror that will soon rain from the skies. In a retaliatory measure, the Soviets have armed and launched a barrage of ICBM's aimed directly at Washington. The missiles are picked up on radar as they rocket over the coast of South Carolina — there's no time at all to warn the unfortunate citizens of Washington. Within minutes the missiles arrive over our capital. They explode, and countless thousands are covered with shaving cream. Have the world's superpowers gone stark raving mad? Read on . . .

Introducing my answer to the world's problem with nuclear crisis/disarmament: *JOKE WARFARE!* Instead of firing missiles and dropping bombs on each other to prove whose country is more powerful, they should take a more light-hearted approach to the matter. Practical jokes would become the order of the day — each country could incorporate the help of special "joke advisors" who could tell the leaders what the best jokes are, and when to use them. In general, Russia and America would try to humiliate and embarrass each other to the point of surrender, or uproarious laughter.

Even the terrorist organizations could get into the act. Instead of bombings and assassinations, political rallies could be the scene of horrendous pie-throwing assaults, with every political figure getting a pie-in-the-face. Restaurants and shopping malls could be attacked by masked individuals armed with harmless (but funny) water balloons.

Of course, the CIA and KGB would want a piece of the action. They could station men on respective sides of the Iron Curtain to

report the effects that different jokes had on the population. They could also continue their covert espionage and sabotage activities. The organizations could use their respective talents (or lack thereof) to find out what practical jokes each country was planning to use, and then find a way to make them backfire.

As you can see, this method of controlling the maniacal, suicidal arms race benefits everyone involved. Well, everyone except the officials and dignitaries who become the frequent butt of many jokes. It would even help the economy — think of the money that would be saved on defense spending. I'm even going to start things rolling by sending a copy of this essay to both President Reagan and Uri Andropov, along with an exploding cigar for each of them.

**David Carpenter**

## The Bridge

As me and my friends Steve, Scott, and David sped along the highway in my new 10,000-dollar convertible toward the Big Apple, I dreamt of riding the waves and showing off in front of the gorgeous girls there would, no doubt, be.

As you may have guessed, we were going to spend the vacation — two weeks — by the sea in New Hampshire, but we wanted to spend a few days in New York to see what we were missing.

We had arrived at a toll-booth now, and Steve, who had insisted on driving, screeched to a stop, burning rubber like hell. I was jerked from my daydreams with a start.

"Hey, anybody got some green stuff?" asked Steve, who never came equipped with essentials, and even if he did have money, he would spend it all on food, even though he, amazingly, wasn't fat. I rummaged around in my pockets, but I only had seven cents left over from McDonald's last night. No one had any money, so Steven jerked ahead with a started and crashed through the barrier. There was a lot of commotion and noise, but we soon left that behind by going eighty-five miles per hour. Hotdog gave one, long whoop and laughed away.

After a short while, we could see the gigantic George Washington Bridge a little way away. It loomed in front of us like a sinister giant waiting to attack the barrier-breakers. David and Scott whistled in unison when they saw it, and said, "Big Apple, here we come!"

David, who wants to be an architect when he's old enough (the only "good boy" in the group), asked Steve to pull over when we reached the bridge. Steve argued for a while, but at last assented. He pulled over a little before we were on it, and we all, a little angrily, piled out.

Dave walked as fast as his fat legs could carry him, while Scott and I chatted happily.

"Hey, man, this is living! Just look at this!" he said, pointing to the bridge and the skyscrapers of New York in the distance.

"Just think of all the rich chicks and high living!"

He stood there a while staring out at New York, dreaming of his fantasy: a Rolls Royce; a gorgeous girl with diamonds, a fur coat, and gold dripping from her; and that content, suave look on her expensive lipstick. I waited patiently for him to wake up, all the while staring wonderingly at the bridge. I mean, I'm not a

bridge fanatic — don't get me wrong — but this *was* impressive. David was stupefied. He just stared, and stared, and stared some more. Finally Scott came to his senses.

"When do you think we'll arrive?" he asked.

"Hell, how am I supposed to know? It *looks* close, but you never can tell with your eyes. Sometimes it looks real close, but it's really far away." Scott seemed satisfied with this answer, so we walked toward the bridge in silence.

When we approached David, he and Steve were discussing the gigantic size of the bridge. Well, at least, Dave was talking excitedly, and Steve was, a little impatiently, listening. David paused for a moment when he saw us, but proceeded rapidly on after about ten seconds. At last, when he was, for the time, finished, Steve the adventurous and athletic one of the group, suggested we climb to the top of the bridge, pointing out that we could see for miles around up there.

"Are you kidding, man?! We could get killed up there!" piped up Scott. I protested, too, but Dave seemed thoughtful. Steve argued furiously, for he loved climbing. I quit the discussion, fed up with the absurd idea. Finally, Steve, all worked up, called us cowards and said he'd go up by himself. We were astounded at this, and tried to persuade him not to, but he had made up his stubborn mind. He moved toward the bridge's girders and began the ascent, with us, protesting, beneath.

Dave was next. After about twenty seconds, he said he would go with him, just to make sure Steve was safe. We half-heartedly argued with him, but he had already started up. Of course, there was no choice but for us to go, too. Two of our best friends had gone, and we would have to follow. We looked sorrowfully at each other, until Spaghetti said that he'd go first. I started to protest, but checked myself. It really didn't matter.

When we were only half-way up, I started to panic. Even half-way was a long way up, and I wasn't exactly comfortable about one thousand feet in the air, to say the least. I looked up at the rest, but they seemed miles away. A little shakily, and very carefully, I proceeded.

When I had almost reached the top, I heard a scream, and looked up. Steve in his determination, had slipped, and was holding on to life with one hand! David and Scott were together now, trying to get over to Steve. I stumbled as fast as I could, without falling, up to Hotdog. I took a different route than they did to get to him faster.

As it turned out, I got to him first. He looked white as a sheet,

and was sobbing and screaming wildly. I tried to calm him down a little, though I was almost as petrified as he. I lay down, and tried not to think of the danger my life, and his, were in. For a fleeting second I saw Steve pulling me down with him, and us falling, falling into space, then sinking slowly into the Hudson River, never to be seen again. I angrily shoved this thought away, and concentrated on saving Steve. I reached down as far as I could (for he was somewhat below me and impossible to walk to. He had, I guess, stumbled down there), but, as much as I tried, I could not reach him. He was, as they say, so close — but yet so far — and not waving, but drowning . . . His grip was slipping, and a sickening felling of utter despair swept over me. A second later he slipped altogether, and with one long sob, he fell into eternity. I screamed and almost fainted at the sight of death — he was too young to die, I thought. I now felt the feeling I had since I was born — the fear of the unknown, of death.

I lay there sobbing for some time until I noticed that Scott and Dave were already making their way down. With a sick feeling I started my descent.

When I reached the bottom, they were waiting in my convertible, staring ahead. I stumbled toward them and fell into the driver's seat. They looked like I felt — sick, sick, sick. I started the car up, turned around, and, wordless, headed home.

**Charlotte Mandell,**

# Ashes to ashes, dust to lust

If I were to tell you I love you  
You might say I must  
You think ashes to ashes  
I think dust to lust.

It started with a wink  
I didn't know what to think  
You said,  
Just have one drink

Another led to another  
We had good laughs together  
You said,  
This could last forever

I wanted to believe you  
Tangueray did please you  
I said,  
This isn't true

One more went down  
It all seemed sound  
You said,  
Bury your doubts in the ground

Another came to our table  
I don't think your able  
You said,  
To make it home tonight

I woke up in your bed  
You said your name was Ned  
Thank God, I said  
We didn't wed

**Janet Tedeschi**

Somewhere in Aruba  
I think it was Manchebo Beach  
I met you and I wanted you  
But thought you were out of reach  
However, you sauntered over  
Handed me a cold rum slush  
Told me you owned the beachclub  
And to forget all the other mush.

You removed me from the white sand  
I, acting so naive  
Brought me to your bedroom  
And ashed me to believe  
That you wished not to love me  
Only to have some fun  
Who was being fooled here?  
I was not the one.

And so we fooled around some  
Then fell into a sleep  
You woke up and needed me  
And I began to weep  
Of course I was being phony  
I really didn't care  
The thought of you loving me  
Made me want out of there.

Asleep you fell once again  
I made it for the door  
I pondered my experience  
I swore — "No more"  
There's too much confusion  
When love is just a game  
Do it right or not at all  
Isn't it a shame?

If I were to tell you I love you  
You might say I must  
You think ashes to ashes  
I think dust to lust.

## A Valentine's Day Lament

Locked away inside of me I have beautiful phrases meant for only two ears at a time. Nestled inside of thes flesh and blood human being are lovely thought which fit their inspirations like a glove. Inspirations made of dreams woven in thin air to help in coping with narry a flower or card. Seven years ago the last infatuation ended and today is just like any other day. The twinge of sadness will melt with the winter snows, slow but inevitable.

I do not expect a knight in silver plate and chain polished to match his smile to gallop by and rescue me from my doldrum. White chargers are better left for true beauty queens or damsels in distress of which I am neither. However another infatuation might be interesting. Love or falling in love is a mixed bag which ties ones sensibilities up in knots. Infatuations on the other hand leave one at a safe distance to dream and observe and if the other party is disinterested no one is hurt or embarrassed if the secret is not betrayed.

This small bit of intrigue helps to pass the time, but cannot take the place of a true love experience. However if a discreet infatuation is nurtured early on it may soften the swirling winds of confusion that accompany mutual feelings of love if they occur, but I doubt it.

Sh.R.

## Explaytation



Nancy R. Levey

## The Gift of Life?

"And what is your blood-type?" said the nurse who closely resembled the witch in the Wizard of Oz. Let's poke it and find out. The nurse lifted my earlobe and stabbed it with what looked like a knitting needle. Suddenly, she pulled and jerked it as if she were milking a cow. I squeaked in horror as she let it go and came up with a test tube full of blood. Yes, the blood mobile was once again paying a visit to Curry College.

I sat in line waiting for them to get me. Why did I come here? I couldn't answer the question. One by one the students went up to the tables. "Just lie back on this slab — Table, dearie, and you won't feel a thing." I watched and cringed as she smiled at the sight of the vein popping out of the kid's arm. He too was terrified, but he tried to laugh it off. Then something in the far corner of the room caught my eye. What appeared to be a human figure under a blanket was being wheeled out with a pack of nurses snickering behind, and one walking away with five or six full bags. "Holy shit," I whispered and she must have heard me, for just as she passed me she whispered something to the guard in the doorway, who stepped a little closer to make the exit a little narrower. This must be my imagination, I thought.

Soon, people were coming in and the room was filling up. I heard one person jokingly ask his friend if "the sore was still there on his lip, but his friend gave no reply — his eyes were rolled back and his tongue was green. Another one rolled out of the room.

It didn't seem to me that as many people were leaving as were coming in, but no one gave notice as they all joked and laughed, the nurses with their sickly smiles and a noticeable whiteness in their faces. Some of them even has a pinkish look in their eyes, and dark circles under them. Then, as I watched a girl fill her bag, I could have sworn I saw a second one roll down as fast as the first was clamped and taken away. A nurse walked by and smiled. Bright red lipstick? I wondered. I gasped at the sight of her pointed eyeteeth. She cackled hideously and walked by, the stench of decay and musty air falling behind her. Oh...my God, ... I thought. No. I'm... It must have been something I ate. I then saw another person on the table, and more blood was coming out of his ear than his arm. He was white as all hell and the nurses, those white nurses just laughed and drank coffee. Another one rolls out, and one behind that one.

One boy was gasping like a fish out of water, his tubes were mixed up with the girl's next to him. She didn't move, a wad of cotton was stuffed into his mouth. "No, no! You can give a little more. The gift of life, remember?" said the nurse as she pushed the man back on the table, his lips trying to form words. I have to get out of here. Somethings wrong. I thought, dreadfully wrong. I don't see any Red Cross pins or buttons, not even an armband. I quickly glanced around the room for an escape way, only to find the security guard staring at me. Again the white face. On the other side of the room, the nurses, those damn nurses were watching me. I felt a hand on my arm. "Your turn, ... that table there. Another one rolls out, a familiar face. I couldn't quite place it, but didn't have time to think about it anyway, because just then, a needle jabbed into my arm. I felt dizzy. I remembered the face now; it was my room mate. The doctor came over, and looked at me with the dark circles. "Hate to eat and run doc, but I just decided I need all my blood . . ." Slam, he pushed me back down onto the table. "All I got to say to you pal, is that it looks like I'm taking yur girl to the Homecoming Dance," as he looked at the two tickets he had just pulled from my coat pocket. "She wanted to go to McDonalds after too, so don't forget THAT BUDDIE," I said. Jesus, there goes twenty-two bucks down the tubes and ... HOLY SHIT, WHAT AM I SAYING?? WHO CARES ABOUT MONEY NOW??? I'm bleeding to death, and I'm thinking about the tickets. The nurses were now filling glasses with ice. They turned and faced me now. Empty glasses. White faces, saliva running. I went into a daze, everything was fading out. They were already drinking from the tubes. They had straws in their mouths. HA HA, I'm on tap! I thought. Draft style! Ha ha. Just then the nurse came in. I could hear her footsteps. Doctor, DOCTOR. Hey ... his v.d. test was positive. Glasses of ice hit the floor.

I smiled.

Jay Patrie

## The Rainbow Race

When I write a piece of prose,  
I am hoping at the close  
That these thoughts which I hold dear  
Will transcend time for many a year  
And shed some light onto the brain;  
That those who read it might proclaim  
Who wrote this profound brilliance?  
What is the name?

And if it's money that I should gain  
And fame and status that should not wain  
Then how lucky I should feel  
Perhaps I'll buy a new automobile

But I'm a dreamer and it's rainbows I chase  
And few ever win a rainbow race.

Sh.R.

Before they got married she forced herself to read books like *The Cinderella Complex* which taught her not to depend on men and left her feeling motivated and independent, and *The Women's Room* which taught her not to depend on men and left her nearly suicidal. She thought the authors of these books and similar others were to a great extent like Walt Whitman: excessively exclamatory and conceited, describing and prescribing for an entire race or major portion thereof, packaging problems and solutions in neat little bunches of words. What these books actually taught her was that you can't depend on your husband, and marriage is not nor should it be a synonym for security and lifelong happiness.

Okay, she understood this, understood everything a woman of the eighties should, that you have to work at a marriage to make it work, that you have to be a competent individual, but interested enough in your husband to put on a black lace nightgown or an apron sometimes. You have to maintain communication and yet remember not to ask him where he's going for his night out with "the guys." And you can't forget that there are droves of single women out there who would kill or at least maim for a man, married or not, and they aren't just in singles bars anymore! They're in boardrooms, offices, elevators, subway stations, everywhere.

So she worked full-time and wore all those "dress-for-success" wool suits women are supposed to wear, but she had a nice drawer full of black negligees in the bedroom and an overflowing recipe file in the kitchen and a cabinet in the bathroom full of spot removers and scouring powder. Actually she didn't mind playing out the different roles and thought he appreciated her efforts.

She hadn't expected life and its problems to go away when she married, so when she missed that sense of security whenever he went out with "the guys" and she stayed home alone reading a book, she berated herself. When dinner burned because he stayed late at work she buried her anger. But it was hardest when he stayed at the office late with a female client, and on these nights jealousy kept loneliness company.

There were nice moments when they would sit together drinking coffee in the morning, newspaper unopened, holding hands under the table. And sometimes in the middle of the night, long after the black lace nightgown had been shed, she would lie still under the warm comforter, listening to his measured breathing. If moments like these didn't happen quite as often as before it was because they were not honeymooners anymore she reasoned.

And sometimes there was an argument over his "business" lunches and dinners with female clients, but she blamed it on her excessive jealousy and he agreed wholeheartedly.

All in all it was going well after three years she thought. She was doing everything right she assured herself, and continued to wear a business suit to work, an apron when she got home, and a black lace nightgown after the dishes were done.

Of course they didn't spend as much time together as she would have liked, but when he began spending more time at the office she began spending more time with some friends. A few were divorced and bitter, but she had come to realize that a lonely supper is worse than the rantings and ravings of a few lonely women.

Eventually their rantings and ravings began to make sense to her. "Boys will be boys," "All men are alike," "All married men stray," and the office-cum-locker room conversations of some men at work panicked her. Prone to the jealousy he so often accused her of, she suspected all deviations. It wasn't the same, she realized. Lately he had been coming home so late that her black lace nightgowns stayed on all night. There was something wrong.

Oh, the cliches: odd phone calls — "Nothing important, dear" — and an increase of "Don't wait supper, working late again, dear" and "Another business meeting, hon."

Only the little terms of endearment fell away from the end of the explanations. Oh, no lipstick on the collar or hotel key in the suitcoat pocket. That would have been *too* soap-opera.

At work she sat at her desk listening to tales of "true love" outside of false marriages. Apparently ashamed of their wives the men would discuss them with near-sneers of ridicule, sarcasm, exasperation, or worse, sheer boredom. And she would answer the phone and lie to the wives: "No, he's in a meeting," "Yes, he's out to lunch with a client," or "He's on another line; may I have him call you back?" and so on.

So when she received the same answers from his secretary her stomach inevitable became queasy and her throat became tight.

You see, she knew. She knew how sneaky they could be, how many twists and turns and maneuvers they perfected to outwit their wives. They were not only exceedingly vulnerable to female attention, they went out deliberately looking for it, for that first step that could lead to another series of lies and coverups. And she knew how a glance on a train or a voice on the phone could escalate into "an Affair" a word she thought too romantic for the

reality.

And every time it happened and superseded hockey game discussions she wondered if *he* had become vulnerable, if women sought *him* — in his office, on lunch hours, on business trips — and worse, if *he* sought *them*. Her divorced friends' bitterness, the roving men in her office, and her own mind-wanderings gnawed at the trust she thought they had built. Trust, he had often said, is the most important aspect of a marriage. And in that context they had talked of her jealousy, the green-eyed monster she tried so hard to keep in a cave. Well, it was out now and had killed Trust, but it was no monster. It was a scared, desperate, shivering little thing.

And when she began to suspect his meetings and phone calls and business dinners it was those black lace nightgowns that reminded her of the smug authors of those books she had read. You can wear your business suits and your aprons and your black lace nightgowns but "all men are alike" and what woman could possibly hold one of them, member of a species so prone to wandering that monogamy was a passing fling?

And the night she called his office, quite close to ten, and his secretary answered, laughing, out of breath, and handed the phone to him so quickly he must have been quite close beside her she started shaking, literally uncontrollably.

"Hello? Hello?" and she dropped the phone onto the receiver. She sat down on the edge of her bed, placing her hands firmly on her shaking ledgs, and she looked into the bureau mirror. How ridiculous that she curled her hair for bed and put on mascara, night after night.

Predictably the phone rang back and she looked at it — two rings, three, four . . . and she looked away, back into the mirror.

It stopped, and she got up off the bed. She pulled the black nightgown over her head and dropped it on the floor. Walking slowly into the bathroom she picked up a face cloth from the towel rack and shut the door.

**Nancy Nelson**

Suffolk Downs

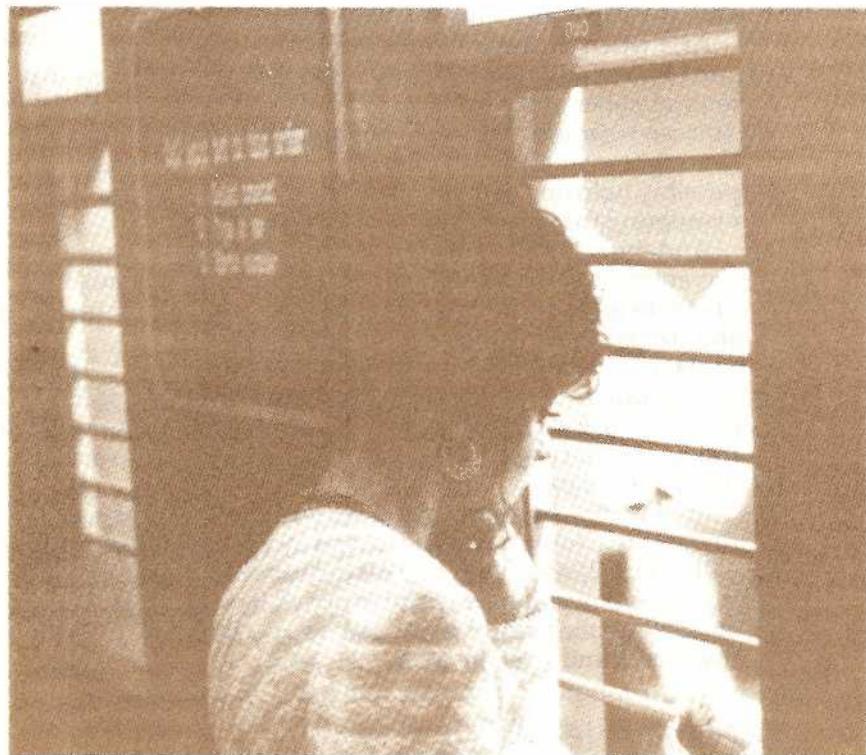


Photo by Bill Littlefield

drip.

Pain?

drip.

Reality?

Silent halls — empty faces  
What's going on inside you?!!!  
Why don't you smile when I smile at you?  
Can't you hear me?!!!

Time for breakfast!  
Time for lunch!  
Time for dinner!  
Ooops, it's already time for bed!

drip.

Pain?

drip.

Reality?

drip.

DEATH

**Linda A. Morrison**

## Silent Rage

To whom I love —  
I'm sorry I don't mean to seem indifferent  
— I know you've tried to be close.  
But you have to understand,  
— anger isn't easy to deal with.  
And I know you will. — I hope.

The night is hot.  
Unable to sleep, I just lay there  
— Sweat running down into my hair.  
Blood begins to gather on the ceiling,  
— my hand clinches.  
The drops fall stark red against white satin.  
My fist sails through the wall.  
The clouds cover the moon  
— and darkness then permeates the soul.  
Then I realize that I'm alone.

I know all this sounds bizarre —  
I don't expect you to comprehend, just to understand.  
Too many years gone by and nothing done — a total waste.  
I have tried to keep it to myself  
— only to no avail.  
Inner upheaval is the price — no charge.  
I know this is heavy —  
and I wouldn't reach out if I couldn't trust you.  
For you are strong — and will not let us fall.

**Edward Gault**

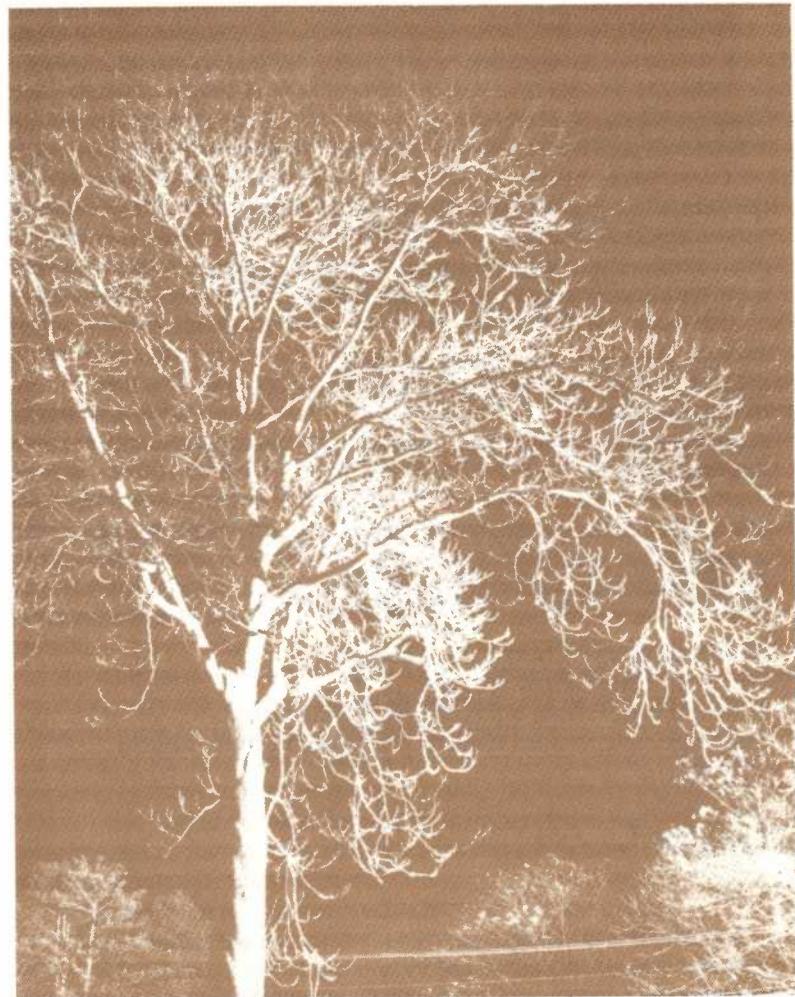


Photo by Paul Butler White

## Free Spirit

It's anger submerged in this trunk  
That keeps surfacing in my eyes.  
Obsession with envy of jealous turning weapons  
Brings to a rising temperature of distrust.

Menial workers-assembly line mind,  
Blue collar immigrant picking grime from under  
Battered nails.  
Suspiciously watchful traits we've come to acquire in  
Our personality.

Stressful minutes while engulfed in one sided conversation.  
Introduction of evil thoughts like  
Unwelcomed viruses conquering the cell.

Sharpened wit-venom struck fangs.  
Oh, your claws show tonight.  
Tattered hotel room walls-stains of pleasure.  
The anger suppressed rises to warm salt in these organs  
Of site.

Lauren C.

## Untitled

Nigel was drained as he sat on the edge of his bed and cried. It had always taken a lot to make him cry. I bet he would have never guessed it could become a media event. An intense emotional trauma or a feeling of guilt, possibly. He had fallen in love and lost. He took a chance and blew it. But, of course, those are the breaks. It took a lot to make Nigel cry that night, for Nigel was not the type to show emotion. But those hot camera lights, and those microphones and mini-cams. My God. Love is deep and strong and very personal. It moves you, and affects you every moment of every day. It's there and it doesn't go away easily. Rejection sucks, and this reporter knows it. I found it quite hard to keep my objectivity at some points, but what reporter wouldn't, having just interviewed a guy who was madly in love, and then was flatly rejected.

My name is Bob London; I'm an investigative reporter for Channel 5's Eye team. Last week, executive producer Bill Evans and I were just about prepared for our latest feature on "Eye Team." We were putting around the news room, killing time on a Thursday night. The feature was all set for the following night. A typical boring report on environmental waste was planned. At 9:15, the call came in. Joe Lango, the night time news anchor at Channel Five, had a nephew by the name of Nigel. Joe seemed to be in a creative mood when he got on the phone with us.

"You mean to say it would be a good idea for a show?"

"Yea, sure it's unique, but is this guy going to give us something to look at, I mean, some good theatrics?"

"Well, you would not believe how incredibly shaken up my nephew is from this experience. Usually he's totally in control, but for the last few days, he's been totally off the wall. His girl friend really screwed his head up when she left him. I think it will make a great eye team report."

"Yea, but will he go along with it?"

"Well, he has his moments where he would like to be a star. He's well aware of his uncle's work in television. He asks me very week about my work on the Channel Five news set. I'm sure he'll be candid and honest about his lady problems. If we hit him without his prior knowledge, we should be able to pull a tear or two. I think it's worth a shot."

"We'll give it a whirl tomorrow morning."

That morning, Friday, I received Nigel's address, and the eye team staff was gathered for instructions.

"What we want here is a total element of surprise," I proclaimed. "The camera people will move swiftly into the house; then they will make their move into Nigel's bedroom. The production and sound crew will come in behind them. After everything is in place, I or another producer will explain what is going on to Nigel. If his uncle's hunches are correct, Nigel will be open and candid about his problems."

At around 12 noon, the van pulled out headed toward Nigel's home on Antwerp Street. The van pulled up in front of the house, and the camera crew went into action. The three men assigned to the crew picked up their equipment and headed for the front door, followed by the sound and production crews. Nigel was viewing all of this from his window. He was still in deep depression, and he had been sulking the entire night before.

"Jesus Christ," he yelled.

Nigel's mother greeted the crew at the door and ushered them upstairs. Nigel waited for them to arrive, and when they entered the room, he threw a lamp at one of the camera men. "Shit," one of the camera men said. "It reminds me of my days in Name working for CBS. We used to get the same type of mortar fire." I quickly moved to where Nigel was sitting to tell him what we were all about. "Listen, Nigel," I said, "your uncle says you love to talk, and we're going to give you the chance to be on an investigative news show." Nigel replied, "Yeth."

"Typical remark for a 17 year old," one of the camera men remarked.

At around 12:45, the equipment had been set and the lighting was coordinated. "Places, everybody," one of the production men exclaimed.

"Ready, action."

"I'm Bob London, along with Channel 5's Eye Team, and we're here with Nigel Lango, a teenager who is suffering from a typical teenage ailment, rejection. Rejection is something that can hit any time, and it is something that affects you very greatly when you are young. Nigel is suffering from rejection right now, and the Channel 5 eye team asked him what it was like."

The cameras focused on Nigel. He went on to tell about his experience.

"Well, it hurts, ya know, it really hurts. You spend all this time really getting to know a person, and then this happens. You share

intimate moments together, and the finest in cotton candy. You really think you have it all together with a fine relationship, and then she dumps you. I mean this chick was on my mind every minute of every day . . . I . . . I . . . I . . . I can't handle it."

At that point, Nigel started to cry, and the cameras kept right on rolling. His teary eyes glistened in the camera lights. The tears streaked down his face and not a word was said for about 3 minutes; only the sight of Nigel crying appeared in viewfinders of the minicams . . . . . and then Nigel went beserk . . . . he stared into the TV camera, got up, and grabbed the camera. Smashing it to bits. After restraints were applied to Nigel, the crew had got up and left. A whole day of filming was wasted. For Channel 5, it meant a loss of about 8 thousand dollars for the video equipment. For Nigel, it was another day of pondering about his lost love. All is fair in love and television, I guess.

## Jim Manuel

## Suffolk Downs



Photo by Bill Littlefield

## Poverty

Listen.

If I had a quarter for every insult you have pitched,  
as easy as shale cutting into a lake . . .

If I had a dime for every persecuting glare you smack with,  
as if everyone were a bratty brother . . .

If I had a nickle for every mockery you donate,  
which is easier for you than giving . . .

If I had a penny . . .

Listen,

If I had a penny, one worthless copper penny, for every  
single time you have spat (so loudly) on a friend or me  
or a stranger (no less important) . . .

If I had just one stinking penny for every time you  
have assisted in turning gold into garbage . . .

I'd be a rich woman.

Never again, as they say.

Listening?

**Nancy R. Levey**

Once we were so close.  
Once we were even one.  
But you went far away,  
because you had to.

I was left alone.  
You called, we wrote.  
But it wasn't the same.

I started to grow,  
all by myself.  
And now I am stronger.  
I am finally me!!!  
I think, I am all I need.

What will happen when  
you come home tomorrow?

**S. Barlow Brock**

## **"Footprints"**

Sweet memories —  
Some friends have come and gone  
But you have left footprints on my life.

Reminding me —  
Of more than just the good times we shared  
But of the love and joy you radiate.

It would be unfair to try and imagine life together again.  
For it should not even be thought of.  
Our togetherness would surely hurt someone.

And so I will just take these footprints  
And I will have them bronzed.  
Sweet memories — forever.

**D.R.**

I just thought of you again  
That makes the millionth time today  
When I'm with you  
I feel so vibrant and free.  
Free from the problems of life  
As if it should be just you and me alone  
On top of the world.  
I can tell; You were the one chosen for me  
Your touch is indescribable; its fabulous.  
The warmth you give, I feel inside of me  
Its like a stimulating high  
Needing you is unbearable  
I don't want to let go; I  
I don't think I can.  
Why is it, the things you want most  
You just can't seem to have?  
You said this to me before  
Now I'm telling you;  
"I don't want some of you some of the time,  
I need to have all of you all of the time."

**Andrea G. Shapiro**



Photo by Paul Butler White



Photo by Margaret McClung

## Stranger

A stranger called me yesterday  
A stranger, I once knew.  
He told me how much he missed me  
And told me how he still loved you.

He started expressing all his thoughts  
Explaining as if I were near.  
I started feeling so sympathetic for him  
I even shed a tear.

He told me how it was over  
How he can still remember your face.  
He wanted *me* forever  
He wanted *me* to take your place.

I couldn't replace a  
friend at all.  
I couldn't replace a  
friend indeed.  
For he showed me the difference  
Between like and love.  
I am your stranger  
A stranger in need.

Lori Tvert

## Little Alexander Frankenstein

The twitching of the train made him realize how simple it would be for him to lose his balance, crushing the newspaper and chest of the woman who was sitting in front of his swaying body. He shifted his mammoth black boots farther and farther apart, but still, he jerked uneasily, as the train did. He couldn't help it.

It has almost happened once; he fell and the entire crowd on the car gathered around his giant heap of a body. They gasped and tisked the misfortune of both the freak and the mother with her son who were under the freak. But no one helped to lift him. He breathlessly struggled to peel himself from on top as the child screamed for air. He got off at the next stop, with wet pants, and waited for a new train. Now, this nightmare haunted him and he wanted to squeeze his yellowish-murkish eye lids shut, but knew that he needed to see to keep a better balance.

The stench of old urine curled up inside his nose and attracted his attention. It made him forget about the chance of sitting on the passenger below him and breaking her like a twig. He forgot. He could tell that there were thin pools of spit gathering around the corners of his chapped mouth, so he wiped them and searched the car to find where the smell was coming from.

A man, older than Alexander ("Alexander the Great!" He proclaimed as a child. "Alexander the Geek," his schoolmates retorted), sat with his hands on his unzipped lap and talked to himself, smiling once in a while, but usually looking very serious. This sort of man did not frighten Alexander, although he could sense that many of the riders were uneasy as the man's voice rose with ferocity. Some people moved away from the rotting smell of the sunburned man, and if they were noticed the man would yell in his defense, screaming political curses. The women looked away and the men seemed to try to figure if they would have to defend any of women or if they could just ignore the man. Alexander watched the disturbed man and smiled when their eyes met, making Alexander's small eyes bunch up into his woolly brows, which supported a massive, sculpted forehead. The bum did not notice Alexander, but instead, continued talking to himself.

Alexander Fay felt that he had an inside appreciation of the bum, although Alexander knew that *his* hair had never been as dirty or *his* clothes be so obscenely crusty and prideless. Still, Alexander understood the loneliness and desperation that the man who talked to himself probably felt. Am I that ugly and hated, Alexander thought. At least I have a job and an apartment and a brother, he said to himself, turning away from the man on the train and concentrating on keeping his balance. It was almost time for work and there was a gymnastic meet that day. Those were Alexander's favorite days.

The job that Alexander had was to help Mr. Tyrone with the cleaning of the Roxbury Elementary School. Mr. Tyrone was the head janitor and Alexander was his assistant, although Alexander usually ended up doing more than his own share of the work. Mr. Tyrone drank and fell asleep by four o'clock, leaving most of the waxing to Alexander. When there was a gymnastic meet at the school, the floors sometimes never got waxed because Alexander like watching the girls work out and compete. The competition was exciting to him. On this day after the meet was over and all the girls had been picked up by their parents, Alexander climbed on the huge pile of blue mats and smelled the young sweat that still lingered in the huge, beige room. He felt strange as he was still able to imagine the girls swinging and leaping and running around him, screaming and giggling. The rings still

then only four, from the project that killed her, the poet, and Uncle Mac. Sapphira never liked Alexander, and if it were up to her, she never would have covered him, but she was unable to control herself, so she did and Alexander became tragic. He grew out of tragic and became a janitor's helper and a partial home owner. Noah was educated and born in the memory of Sapphira, Uncle Mac, and little Alex Fay.

In his apartment, Alexander had a framed photograph of his only sister, but in the photo, Sapphira was smiling. She was peuring. Sapphira wasaubing because her little brother, Alex, had just received an invitation to join the kindergarten class right after his fourth birthday. He would be in the same class as Sapphira, who was two years older. Alexander didn't remember any of that. He only spent two months in kindergarten with his sister, and then it took him eighteen years to finish the sixth grade.

Once out of the car, Alexander felt much better. He stretched his back out and reached for his hands behind him, growing with satisfaction. His air was still bleak and it swung his arms. Inside, Judy welcomed him warmly, but neutrally at the same time. Alexander could tell the difference. He bent down, as far as he could to lift his niece, Greta, and his nephew, Zeke, into the air. Alexander was thankful that they were both still small. To the children, Uncle Alex was just as smart and swift as their father, just a lot taller.

Alexander turned away while Noah and Judy said hello to each other. Greta, as she did with all of her relatives, because she was only four, asked Alexander to read her a story before dinner. Alexander looked at her and told her that he not only didn't really like reading her a story, but that he had forgotten a lot of the reading rules he had learned as a child. He could read signs and television commercial slogans. Greta, made a farting noise with her tongue and went to turn on the television set. Zeke played at his play pen and with his parents behind him, not noticing any attention from Uncle Alex.

Both Greta and Alexander went to bed at eight o'clock. Greta was told to get to bed, but Alexander preferred to. He was very, very tired and fell asleep almost instantly. Judy's sheets were much cleaner and softer than the sheets in his apartment.

At fifteen minutes after eight, Zeke began to cry because Greta had woken him up with a smack on the head with a coloring book. Noah took Greta into the living room, while Judy attended to Zeke.

"I am so very, very angry with you, young lady," he yelled.

In his sleep, Alexander heard this.

"I just wanted to play. It wasn't my fault," Greta decried.

"I don't care! You should have left your brother alone!"

"I want to play!"

"Don't you dare yell at me!" Noah said harshly.

Greta made a farting noise with her tongue and Alexander's stomach tightened and his lips pursed, although his eyes remained shut.

Noah jerked Greta up into the air, holding her by the wrists with one hand, as if she were a chicken being auctioned, and he slapped her ass with ferocity. Her mouth spread as wide open as it could go, looking like the corners of her mouth would split, but no sound came out. Tears began to drizzle from her eyes. He held her up a little higher and spanked her again.

A sound rang through the house like pigs being slowly slaughtered.

"I'm very, very angry with you!"

Alexander sat up abruptly, with his eyes wide open, and screamed, "It wasn't my fault!" and wet the bed.

Nancy R. Levey

